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MN014901. SECNAV Sends Holiday Message
MN014902. DTs Invited to Convert to HM
MN014903. VINSON Medical Team at the Top of Their Game
MN014904. International Military Conference Combats Spread of AIDS
MN014905. Kids Aren't Left in Cold, Thanks to Heartwarming Acts
MN014906. Portsmouth Staff Experiences Real World Scenario
MN014907. Bio-Chem Scenario Tests Bremerton Capabilities
MN014908. Chief of Chaplains Delivers Christmas Message on NBC
MN014909. Disney Salutes Military With Complimentary Admission
MN014910. HealthWatch: Holiday Safety Hints

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MN014901. SECNAV Sends Holiday Message

WASHINGTON, DC - The Honorable Gordon R. England, Secretary of the Navy, sends the following holiday message to the men and women of the Department of the Navy:

During this holiday season, Americans across our great nation will gather in their homes and places of worship to count their blessings and look forward to the new year with hope. This year, many Sailors and Marines stand their watch far from home. Whether you sail off the coast of other nations, stand guard on foreign soil, or serve nobly on the home front, I know that every Marine, Sailor, and civilian in the Department of the Navy stands ready to answer our nation's call.

Our mission is clear. Our calling to maintain peace and stability for our nation and the world has never been more important. The Navy and Marine Corps team's devotion to this noble cause has been constant since the birth of the republic. As we celebrate the next few weeks with our family, friends and shipmates, let us take time to give thanks for the blessings of freedom that we have inherited and pray for the day when the world is forever at peace. Until that day, our nation will continue to depend on your honor, courage and commitment to keep America free.

It is a privilege to serve with you during this critical time in our nation's history. Please accept my best wishes for a safe and joyous holiday season. God bless each of you, your families, and the United States of America!

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MN014902. DTs Invited to Convert to HM
From Chief of Naval Personnel

WASHINGTON, DC - If you're a DT3, have the minimum time on station or are approaching your detailing window, your invitation may be in the mail to convert to HM and take full advantage of the opportunities that come with converting.

In early November, letters were sent to 203 DT3s with no advanced school training or who are trained as a field service DT (NEC 8707),

explaining the opportunity to convert and serve as a general duty HM after graduating from HM "A" school.

For those who qualify, the opportunity exists for advanced follow-on training at an HM "C" school: psychology technician (NEC 8485), laboratory technician (NEC 8506), surgery technician (NEC 8483), preventive medicine technician (NEC 8432), pharmacy technician (NEC 8482), or basic x-ray technician (NEC 8451).

Completing one of these "C" schools may also make an HM eligible for a Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) after school completion.

"Manning for the DT3s is currently at 137 percent. Since advancement opportunity is determined by the total number of quotas divided by the total number of test passers, the end result is a reduced opportunity for advancement," said DTC (SW/FMF) Steven Green, technical advisor for the medical and dental communities at the Office of Naval Personnel.

"The Hospital Corpsman rating is only 89 percent manned. Converting at this time is a win-win-win situation for the two ratings and the qualified DTs who wish to convert HM," added Green.

Another advantage to converting is that advancement opportunities to HM2 are three times better than advancement to DT2.

"HMs were promoted to second class with a 5.6 percent opportunity while promotion for DTs to second class were only at a 1.9 percent rate," said Green.

"It's a good move. The HM rating is the largest rating in the Navy with about 22,000 HMs," explained HM1 Ronald Powell, also a technical advisor for the medical and dental communities. "It will help fill the void at the HM E-4 level and unclog the over-manning for DT3s."

Approximately 100 phone calls have been received with many giving verbal intentions of submitting a package to convert. Officials foresee a better future for both ratings even if only 50 percent of eligible Sailors do so.

Other ratings besides DTs can also put in for conversion to the HM rating. See your command career counselor to see if you are eligible to convert. For additional information contact DTCM(SW) Dziadon 703-695-3868, DSN 225 or e-mail nl32dl3a@bupers.navy.mil., or DTC(SW/FMF) Steve Green 703-614-6853, e-mail nl32dl3c@bupers.navy.mil.

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MN014903. VINSON Medical Team at the Top of Their Game
By JO2 Galloway T. Looney, USS CARL VINSON (CVN 74)

USS CARL VINSON, At sea - Following recent inspections by the force medical officer for Pacific Fleet Naval Air Force (AIRPAC), USS CARL VINSON's medical department received praise for programs supporting the ship's medical readiness.

The AIRPAC force medical officer ranked CARL VINSON number one in the overall crew readiness and birth month recall (BMR) programs. CARL VINSON's medical team received the highest scores during the birth month medical surveillance and medical readiness inspections.

During a typical BMR, Sailors receive a complete update of all their immunizations, hearing and eye tests, a physical examination and a tuberculosis test.

These tests are performed once a year, and coincide with the patient's birthday.

"We make sure everyone has had shots such as yellow fever, measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus and even a flu shot," said HMC (SW) Marvin Sleight, senior preventive medicine technician. "I verify all the information against their records, to see if they have had all their shots."

To accomplish one hundred percent preventive medicine for the crew, the

medical department developed a team of corpsmen for the BMR program.

"We started a new division dedicated to BMR needs," said HM1(SW/AW/FMF) Patrick Wiens. "One full time corpsmen, HM2 Russell Cole, and a group of junior corpsmen rotate every two months."

With the attitude and work ethic of the corpsmen in the medical department, it is no surprise they received the number-one ranking.

"CARL VINSON's medical department is clearly setting the standard in the Pacific Fleet," said LT Doug Stephens, MC, the carrier's medical department division officer. "CARL VINSON must maintain a high level of medical readiness, and preventive medicine is the key."

Stephens attributes the medical department's success to not only the professionalism of CARL VINSON's corpsmen, but also to the ship's chain of command. "They are the biggest supporters of the program."

In June 2000, the carrier was in last place in both preventive medicine categories. But thanks to the hard work of the medical team, CARL VINSON has reached the top.

"It's a standard that we try to maintain," said Sleigh. "AIRPAC standard is 90 percent. It's not a CARL VINSON standard. Our standards go well beyond that to ensure all our Sailors are operationally ready."

But as HMCM(SW) Marion Murphy-Osborne will tell you, communication is the key.

"In not only the medical department, but throughout the ship we couldn't do it without the other departments' help," said Murphy-Osborne. "(The recognition is) not only for us but for the ship as a whole."

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MN014904. International Military Conference Combats Spread of AIDS
By CAPT Emily Hopkins, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, Calif.

MONTEREY, Calif. - Senior military health officials from the United States and 34 nations met last week to find ways to combat a serious enemy attacking their forces - HIV-AIDS.

More than 80 participants used simultaneous language interpreters to share information and create a civil-military alliance to combat the disease.

The Navy's senior representative at the conference was RADM Steven E. Hart, MC, the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's assistant chief for operational medicine and fleet support. The Navy is designated by the Department of Defense as the lead service for implementing U.S. cooperation and partnerships with other armed forces throughout the world to battle HIV and AIDs.

"The HIV infection rate is increasing dramatically in many nations' military forces, compromising our partners in peacekeeping and the coalition fighting the war on terrorism," said Hart. "The implications for both the United States and its partners are significant as the pool of available, well-trained military and peacekeeping troops are decimated by this disease."

Military forces everywhere are increasingly challenged by the changing nature of threats to national and international peace and security. They face increasing internal as well as cross-border conflicts, massive displacements of populations, and complex humanitarian emergencies. Statistics have shown that military personnel are particularly vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases due to such factors as their age (15-24), which makes them vulnerable to risk-enhancing behavior, such as drinking alcohol and drug use.

Additionally, the military lifestyle requires them to regularly be away from home for long periods. As a result, they often pursue inappropriate recreation and other activities to relieve stress. The issue is compounded

by the fact that sex workers and illicit drug dealers target military installations for these same reasons.

The participants discussed how some features of military service could be turned to advantage in the war against AIDS. For example, in many countries, military service is an esteemed profession, and educated military personnel can become role models for healthy behavior, while on active duty and after they return home.

The Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey hosted the conference.

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MN014905. Kids Aren't Left in Cold, Thanks to Heartwarming Acts

WASHINGTON, DC - More than 200 youngsters from Washington, DC's neediest families will be warm this winter season, thanks to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's annual coat drive.

According to CAPT Jane F. Vieira, CHC, who headed up the drive, the BUMED community came through with an overwhelming response, exceeding her expectations and last year's totals.

Besides coats, hundreds of children's books, hats and mittens were collected.

The goods will go to DC's Council for Child Abuse and Neglect and to Unity Healthcare, an organization that supports children who have a parent with AIDS, and may have AIDS or be HIV positive themselves.

The BUMED Petty Officer's Association also helped support the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve's "Toys for Tots" program, collecting more than 100 toys.

"Harry Potter toys were big this year," said HM2 Linda Byrne, who helped promote toy collection for the association. She said board games, stuffed animals, Beanie Babies, and other items were also donated. HM1 Ernest Thompson, RP1 Patrick Turner, RP2 Wanda Wright, and HM2 Paul Mitchell were also active in collecting toys for area tots.

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MN014906. Portsmouth Staff Experiences Real World Scenario

By Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Public Affairs

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - It is a training scenario ripped from world events - terrorists have attacked government buildings in Portsmouth. In another time, before 9-11, it might have been just another drill, but now it had a new urgency.

It began as a typical Thursday morning. People were coming to the base fresh from their morning commutes, expecting just another day at the office. That all changed at 7:30 a.m., when three key players in the scenario arrived at the main gates of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. The Coast Guardsmen staggered up, worn and disheveled, frantically pleading for help. Coughing and gasping for fresh air, they explained they had come from the Federal Building in downtown Portsmouth. The building had just been hit by a chemical attack perpetrated by terrorists.

Base security did their best to console and comfort the victims while they awaited medical assistance. More people arrived from the Federal Building, pleading for help.

Emergency medical teams, decontamination crews and Portsmouth's core medical staff were called into action to put their training and skills to work in this reality-based simulation.

Once the initial medical teams arrived at the gate, fully decked out in chemical protective suits, they evaluated victims and the situation and began the difficult task of getting the victims to the emergency room parking lot, which had become a treatment area for victims. Some made it to the area on their own. Others were transported in a van commandeered by

security. And some victims helped each other.

Outfitted with fire hoses and a portable shower, the decontamination team worked feverishly to rinse the victims. Then the wounded were taken inside the emergency room for further evaluation.

But then, just as emergency workers seemed to have things under control, the scenario took another twist - a crazed suicide bomber strapped with grenades and C-4 explosives attacked the Naval School of Health Sciences.

Not only were Portsmouth's main medical personnel called into action, but a number of staff members from throughout the hospital were called in to help transport the "wounded" and the "dead."

The events of Sept. 11 is why Portsmouth opted to conduct such a drill, and in typical fashion, staff rose to the occasion, according to CAPT Michael Krentz, MC, Portsmouth's exercise coordinator and associate director for fleet and family medicine.

"The (men and women of Portsmouth) did extremely well today. I'd be very proud to serve in a war with any of them," he said. "Things today went flawlessly and they proved they're ready and able to handle any (serious) situation."

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MN014907. Bio-Chem Scenario Tests Bremerton Capabilities

By Judith Robertson, Naval Hospital Bremerton

BREMERTON, Wash. - In the shadow of recent world events, Naval Hospital Bremerton's disaster drill scenario for 150 selected staff was one that now seems all too imaginable. Victims had been exposed to anthrax spores - which was represented by holiday glitter - and arrived at the emergency room complaining of symptoms of inhaled or cutaneous anthrax. This bio-terrorism scenario provided a challenge for many departments and allowed a close-to-real-life picture that highlighted the strength of the staff and areas for improvement.

Going into the drill there were known questions. Can hospital beds fit back into the old ward that had been divided into exam rooms to increase outpatient capacity? Can capped medical gas hookups be reopened? Who needs personal protective equipment? What kind of training does staff need to treat affected patients? Can the emergency room ventilation be isolated? Is the decontamination shower adequate?

While Bremerton routinely drills in disaster preparedness, the emphasis in the Pacific Northwest area has been on earthquakes or trauma scenarios. Biological or chemical exposure incidents were, for the most part, relegated to the textbook. Historically military medicine has been preparing for the possibility of biological or chemical warfare - in someone else's backyard. The attacks on U.S. soil have brought the battlefield home, lifted it out of textbook pages and put it squarely on the doorstep of hospital emergency rooms.

The Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations has directed greater levels of hospital awareness in this key area.

"This was our first realistic large-scale drill involving decontamination and a mass casualty scenario of an infectious agent," said LCDR Michael Danenberg, MC, the hospital's disaster preparedness officer. "Identification of our patient flow patterns and assessing how many personnel we could realistically care for, was invaluable for an honest evaluation of our capabilities."

During the drill, Executive Officer CAPT Patrick Kelly, MSC, moved into the role of incident commander, conducting response efforts of the hospital's emergency operations center. Hospital Commanding Officer CAPT Christine Hunter, MC, explained that freeing her from responsibilities

allows her to observe the action and make recommendations.

While the entire nation's medical communities are grappling their response to similar scenarios, Hunter said, it became evident during the drill, that the military has some very major advantages.

"We have a clear chain of command, a standardized patient tracking process, and because we are the parent command for Fleet Hospital Five, we have the equipment we need on hand," Hunter said. "We also are able to benefit from the excellent training provided by the Army's world-class chem-bio training facility, U.S. Army - and, we know how to do security. Our military medical structure provides a very good foundation to build on. We want to be prepared for any event."

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MN014908. Chief of Chaplains Delivers Christmas Message on NBC

By Lynette S. Williams, Chief of Naval Personnel

WASHINGTON, DC - The homily for "The Greatest Gift," the theme for an NBC Christmas special, will be delivered by the Chief of Navy Chaplains, RADM Barry C. Black, CHC.

Black, an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister went to New York City in late November to tape "The Greatest Gift" before a live audience. His inspiring and unrehearsed Christmas message earned him a standing ovation from the "congregation."

VADM Norb Ryan Jr., Chief of Naval Personnel, knows Black well.

"Barry is well known for his charisma and his unwavering ability to reach his audience in a way that inspires us all. He serves as a wonderful role model and we are lucky to have him as our Chief of Chaplains," said Ryan.

The 60-minute program will feature music by the Harlem Boys Choir, Sandi Patty, Wintley Phipps, and the Brockton Advent Children's Choir from Brockton, Mass. Another highlight of the program will be a reading of the Christmas story by people intimately involved in the Sept. 11 attacks on America. Three firefighters, a police officer, an emergency room physician, and family members of many who died will share the story of Jesus' birth.

"The Greatest Gift" will air on both Christmas Eve and Christmas morning. NBC affiliates are likely to broadcast only one of the two airings, so check your local listings for the exact time and station.

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MN014909. Disney Salutes Military With Complimentary Admission

ANAHEIM, Calif. - To honor American men and women fighting for freedom, Disney will allow active U.S. military personnel complimentary admission into their theme parks, and will also give ticket discounts for family members and friends.

"Disney's Armed Forces Salute" will be offered from Jan. 1, through Apr. 30, 2002, by both Disney vacation kingdoms in the United States - the Disneyland Resort in California and the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. Active U.S. military personnel, with proper U.S. military identification, are eligible, including active members of the U.S. Coast Guard and activated members of the National Guard or Reservists.

An appropriate military ID is required at time of purchase.

Active duty members of the U.S. military may purchase tickets at half price for up to five friends and family members.

For more information on "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" at the Disneyland Resort, guests may call (714) 781-4565 or visit www.disneyland.com.

The Disney Cruise Line is also offering special rates to active military personnel, depending upon availability of staterooms. For more information or to book a Disney Cruise Line vacation, visit

www.disneycruise.com or call Disney Cruise Line at (888) 325-2500.

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MN014910. HealthWatch: Holiday Safety Hints

From the Navy Safety Center, Norfolk, Va.

The signs are everywhere: Newspaper ads promoting sales, stores decorated in glitter and trim, and lawn ornaments and window lights flashing the message - the holidays have arrived. Young and old alike are making plans for shopping, entertainment and travel to visit friends and family. It is a busy time of year with hectic schedules that can increase stress, and with it, the possibility of mishaps.

Let's ensure this holiday season is festive, pleasantly memorable and injury-free. To achieve these goals, here are some safety hints:

- Identify, assess and ask yourself what you can do about the hazards likely to be encountered during the holidays, then make risk decisions and implement controls to eliminate them.
 - Always wear your seat belt and buckle children into approved child restraint systems.
 - Riding your Harley in a state that doesn't require a helmet? Wear it anyway. The Department of the Navy and Commandant, Marine Corps require their use at all times.
 - Don't drink and drive; choose a designated driver before the party begins.
 - Don't tailgate, weave in and out of lanes without signals, or follow too close.
 - Plan your trips and adjust your schedule to include rest.
 - To ensure you wake up alive, have your home heating system checked by professionals and look around for fire hazards.
 - Check holiday lights and ensure they bear a label such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).
 - Check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Ensure the ladder is safely set before climbing on the roof.
 - Pace yourself when clearing snow and ice from the walk and driveway.
- Finally, expect the unexpected and monitor events as they occur. Be prepared to adjust your plan of action as conditions change. If necessary, let someone know you need help.
- Make this the safest holiday ever. Think risk management at home and on the road and stay safe.

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Editor's Note: MEDNEWS will not be published Thursday, Dec. 27. Happy holidays from the BUMED public affairs staff.

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